ABSTRACT

Collection of Family History in Epidemiologic Studies of Coronary Artery Disease: Can We Do Better?

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Family history of coronary artery disease (CAD) and related disorders increases CAD risk. An individual's familial risk of CAD can be assessed by considering: number of relatives with CAD and their relationship to the individual, age at CAD diagnosis, gender of relatives with CAD, and prevalence of related conditions (e.g., stroke, diabetes, and hypertension). Familial risk assessment can influence prevention strategies such as lifestyle changes and screening. The purpose of this analysis was to determine whether epidemiologic studies of CAD included the type of family history data that could be used for familial risk assessment. Studies were identified through the National Heart Lung and Blood institute website and literature review. Out of 13 studies identified, 10 collected some family history data. All of the studies collected data on parents but none of the studies collected data on second degree relatives. The studies varied as to whether they included the collection of age of disease onset and related conditions. Because there are no standards for collecting family history, data from most current studies would be limited for assessing familial risk and comparing risk prevalence across studies. The development of standardized and validated family history questions and disease specific modules would enable a more accurate assessment of family history as a risk factor for CAD in populations and analyses of the association of familial risk with prevention strategies.